

P 121249Z FEB 85
FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISHU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2255
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY RIYADH
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME

S E C R E T MOGADISHU 01643

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PREL SD UR US
SUBJECT: REPORT OF SOMALI OVERTURE TO SOVIETS

¶1. (SECRET/NOFORN/WNINTEL/NO CONTRACT/ORCON-ENTIRE TEXT)

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¶2. AN ARAB AMBASSADOR TOLD ME FEBRUARY 1T THAT SOVIET AMBASSADOR ILICHEV HAD TOLD HIM OF BEING APPROACHED RECENTLY BY THE SOMALIS ON THE QUESTION OF NORMALIZING RELATIONS. ILICHEV REPORTEDLY SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN INVITED TO DINNER BY A RANKING OFFICER OF THE SOMALI FOREIGN MINISTRY, WHO HAD WITH HIM TWO OTHER MFA OFFICERS. THE SOMALI'S MESSAGE TO ILICHEV HAD BEEN THAT SOMALIA WAS FULLY READY TO NORMALIZE ITS RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION. ACCORDING TO MY ARAB SOURCE, ILICHEV SAID THAT HE HAD RESPONDED THAT THE SOVIETS WERE READY BUT SEVERAL THINGS WOULD HAVE TO BE DONE. THE SOMALIS WOULD HAVE TO TREAT HIM PROPERLY AS AN AMBASSADOR; THEY WOULD HAVE TO STOP THEIR ANTI-SOVIET CAMPAIGN; THEY WOULD HAVE TO CALL OFF THE SECURITY FORCES WHICH HAD PRACTICALLY BUILT A WALL AROUND HIS EMBASSY; AND TASS AND THE SOMALI NEWS AGENCY SHOULD EXCHANGE CORRESPONDENTS. ILICHEV REPORTEDLY SAID THAT SO FAR THE SOMALIS HAD NOT RESPONDED TO HIS SUGGESTIONS. (I RECALL SIRO'S APM-2452 WHICH MIGHT BE REFERRING TO THE SAME SOMALI-SOVIET CONTACT, REPORTING THAT IN MID-JANUARY ILICHEV WAS APPROACHED BY THE RECENTLY APPOINTED SOMALI AMBASSADOR TO MOSCOW, ABDULLAHI SHEIKH ISMAIL, AND THEN BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE MPAS ASIA AND SOCIALIST COUNTRIES DEPARTMENT, ABDULLAHI EGAL NUR, TO SEEK SOVIET ASSISTANCE IN CONVINCING ETHIOPIA TO ENGAGE IN A DIALOGUE WITH SOMALIA TO ATTEMPT TO RESOLVE THE SOMALI-ETHIOPIAN CONFLICT.)

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¶3. AT THE OPENING SESSION OF PARLIAMENT ON THE EVENING OF FEBRUARY 11, PRESIDENT SIAD BARRE DID NOT MENTION THE UNITED STATES OR WESTERN EUROPE BUT SPOKE HARSHLY ABOUT ETHIOPIAN EFFORTS TO DESTABILIZE SOMALIA; HE ALSO CRITICIZED SOMALI DISSIDENTS WITHOUT NAMING THEM AS SUCH. HE WENT ON TO SAY (ACCORDING TO THE INTERPRETATION; A WRITTEN TEXT IS NOT YET AVAILABLE) THAT THE ETHIOPIANS WERE RECEIVING EXTENSIVE SUPPORT FROM THE SOVIET REGIME AND ITS ALLIES.

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¶4. COMMENT: THE REPORT FROM THE ARAB AMBASSADOR SOUNDS CREDIBLE. DESPITE HIS STATEMENT IN PARLIAMENT, SIAD BARRE MADE A PUBLIC STATEMENT LAST WEEK (MOGADISHU 1520) OF HIS READINESS TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW; MOREOVER, AS WE NOTED, THIS WAS NOT A NEW DEPARTURE IN SIAD'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS. WE ARE NOT SURE WHAT MOTIVE SIAD BARRE MIGHT HAVE FOR MAKING A PRIVATE APPROACH TO THE SOVIETS ON NORMALIZATION. MY ARAB SOURCE SUGGESTED THAT IT WAS TO GOAD US INTO PROVIDING MORE ASSISTANCE, SINCE SIAD WOULD ASSUME THAT WE WOULD BECOME AWARE OF THE APPROACH. BUT I THINK IT IS ALSO CONCEIVABLE

THAT EVEN IF SIAD SEES NO POSSIBILITY OF RECEIVING
FUTURE MILITARY OR DEVELOPMENT AID FROM THE SOVIETS,
HE MIGHT THINK IT POSSIBLE TO GET THE SOVIETS TO
RESTRAN THE ETHIOPIANS FROM PUTTING PRESSURE ON
HIS BORDERS.

BRIDGES